

THE BEACON

FOR SCHOOL AND HOME

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The Airplane Santa Claus.

BY FRANCES M. BOCK.

"COO-EE! Coo-ee!" Mary Elinor sprang to the door of the ranch-house kitchen as she heard her mother's call. Mother, she knew, had been up near the spring-house working with her bees. Yes, there she was, just coming around the shoulder of the hill.

"Where are the twins?"

The voice reached her faintly, and she looked around in startled surprise. Bobs and Betty were nowhere in sight.

"They must have slipped by while I was baking," thought the girl; "I had not missed them."

"I'll look for them, mother," she called back, and sped down the trail that led across their ranch in the "Back Country" as the region at the very southern part of California is called.

The Bentons had recently come to this ranch from their city home. Ever since the twins were babies Mrs. Benton had suffered from ill-health. Here among the mountains, living mainly in the open air, her strength was slowly returning. The financial resources of the family had gone into the purchase of the ranch and improvements upon it. That fact made the prospect of Christmas, now near at hand, less attractive than usual.

As she sped along the trail in search of Bobs and Betty, Mary Elinor remembered a recent talk with her father. His face had grown grave as he studied his last statement from the bank.

"I hope we can get along until returns from the crops begin to come in," he had said; "but we must economize in every way. Not a dollar of expense except for necessary things."

"O father! Can't we afford a few toys and Christmas-tree decorations for the Blesseds?" That was the family's favorite name for Bobs and Betty.

"We'll be doing well if we keep shoe-leather on all four of their little feet," he had answered.

Mary Elinor thought of this as she began to trace the print of little shoes in the dust, and remembered the growing hole in one of Bobby's soles.

"We must plan some way to make a real Christmas for them," she thought as she sped along.

Then, as she rounded one of the hills, she rubbed her eyes and stared. There, on the wide field which sloped at the far end down into the valley, she saw—could it be? It was! A real airplane, resting calmly in the middle of the meadow.

For all her fifteen years, Mary Elinor ran full speed until she came near to it. Bobs and Betty were there before her, talking in excited voices to one of the aviators, while the other worked at the engine.

"O Mary Elinor! It's a nairplane! It flew right down here! Come and see it! Jack makes it go!"

The twins both talked at once, turning

back with eager confidence toward their new-found friend. Mary Elinor was surprised to see that the aviator was not much older than her brother Dick.

"You see, I have a small brother and sister at home in Berkeley," he explained with a frank smile that made Mary Elinor feel she had known him all her life. "We had engine trouble and had to land. I'm Jack Randall."

"I'm Mary Elinor Benton," she said shyly. "I see you are acquainted already with Bobs and Betty."

"He's a flying-man! He's a flying-man!" chanted the twins, clinging to his hands.

"Look out I don't fly away with you!" he said with a cheerful grin, tugging them nearer to the machine, while Mary Elinor followed gaily.

"I'll fly 'way off into the sky," said Betty. "Yes, sir! right up, so high you can't see me!" This was Bobs.

"And we'll come back in time to see Santa Claus."

"And his reindeer; and hear the bells; and get the presents he'll leave for us."

"You're behind the times, young man. How could Santa's reindeer get down here with the sleigh? There's no snow on this very southern edge of California except what's on the tops of the high mountains. No, sir!" These days Santa comes in an airplane." Jack's eyes twinkled at Mary Elinor over the heads of the Blesseds,

"In a nairplane?" the twins shrieked together.

"Sure thing. Just you watch on Christmas Eve and see what you will see!"

Mary Elinor longed to explain that Santa was not likely to visit the twins at all this year, but was relieved from her embarrassment by the arrival of her father and Dick. They went at once to the help of the man at the engine. Soon Mrs. Benton appeared and there were more greetings and introductions.

Jack explained that he and Lieutenant Avery were part of the regular patrol for the Mexican border, between North Island field in San Diego Bay and Yuma. As it was nearing noon and the repairs were finished, Mrs. Benton invited them to stay to dinner, which she and Mary Elinor would have ready for them all in half an hour.

"O mother!" mourned the girl, as they followed the trail back to the house, "that young airman has been telling the twins that Santa Claus comes now in an airplane and that they must watch for him. I'm afraid the Blessed's are going to be dreadfully disappointed."

"Never mind, dear. It is good for us all to hope and imagine. We will make them some little toys, and candy from our own honey, and they will be almost as happy as if they had all the usual trimmings."

"Lucky my baking was all done this morning," said the girl; "five loaves of bread, a pan of rolls, and a fine big honey-cake I meant as a surprise for father and Dick."

"My capable daughter! Our family could not get on without you." The tender smile that accompanied the words warmed Mary Elinor's heart, and she gave her mother a quick hug.

The two aviators were firm friends of the Bentons when that dinner was ended—grateful indeed for the entertainment and the help they had received. Mr. Benton found that Lieutenant Avery came from his own home State and was a graduate of his own university. The two visitors learned from the conversation much about the brave struggle the family was making, and guessed more.

When they started away, Jack Randall turned to Bobs and Betty.

"Now, youngsters," he said, "do not fail to watch for Santa Claus's airplane on Christmas Eve, just before sunset. You might get a glimpse of it, you know."

"We will! We will!" they shouted in unison.

Then the two visitors were off in their plane, with a roar of machinery and a whistling of the wind through the huge wings. As they rose higher and higher into the sky and then sailed off into the far distance, Bobs and Betty hid their faces against mother's shoulder.

The day before Christmas was a typical Back-Country winter day. It was stinging cold in the morning, and all a-sparkle with frost, while the higher mountain tops shone dazzling white with snow.

The family at the ranch-house ate breakfast cosily near the warm kitchen stove, instead of on the porch. But before the sun had been up many hours every tang of frost was gone from the air, and by noon it was almost as warm as summer.

The whole ranch hummed with happy excitement and anticipation. Santa Claus was coming!

The twins danced radiantly in and out watching for Santa Claus in his airplane. Their faith in the dear old Christmas saint infected even their sophisticated older brother and sister, who had long since relegated Santa Claus to the golden land of Myth and Fable, where the Fairy Folk still weave their happy spells.

Dick had cut down the prettiest little juniper tree that ever grew on a windy hill, and there was much mystery in a corner of the living-room where Mary Elinor was doing something behind a curtain.

As the shining day waned the wind died down, and everything seemed hushed with waiting. Purple shadows crept up the mountain sides and a tint of rose-color began to glow on the snowy summits.

Then a tiny speck came sailing over the rosy peaks and a familiar whirring sound called the family once more to watch the sky. Bobs and Betty stood gripping each other's hands, awed to silence, gazing upwards like a pair of cherubs in a picture.

Presently Dick whispered, "It's a larger plane—I can tell by the engine!"

And so it was, a huge, beautiful thing, as it grew nearer.

"Santa Claus's airplane has big white wings!" breathed Betty, in a dream.

Then there began to happen the strangest and most wonderful things that these barren mountains had ever seen. With a roar and a swoop the airplane dipped nearer, swinging in circles over the ranch. Suddenly the air was filled with a shower of bright things, floating and falling like a rain of stars.

And stars there were—gold and silver ones, such as shine yearly on the Christmas trees of the world. They fell on the ground, and the children ran scrambling after them with shouts of glee.

"Stars! Stars!" they cried, running to mother with their treasures. "Christmas stars, mother! See!"

And then Bobs forgot all about stars in a new wonder.

"Balloons!" he squealed. "Blue balloons!"

"Oh! oh! red balloons!" echoed Betty.

They fell to chasing the bright balloons (that were now floating nearer, each one weighted with some small object.

Then Dick woke up.

"Look at the parachute!" he shouted.

Sure enough! There was a tiny parachute sailing gracefully down from the sky, in the wake of the now rapidly receding airplane. Another could soon be seen, and with a whoop Dick set off for the upper end of the ranch, where it seemed likely that the second one would land.

The whole family followed, laughing, and leaping after the prizes, like children chasing butterflies.

"Birds! Look at the birds!" cried Bobs.

"Oh, they're bluebirds!" cried Mary Elinor, clapping her hands with delight when she saw that each balloon supported a fluttering toy bird. As she watched the two children running after them she thought of Tytyl and Mytyl, chasing bluebirds in the enchanted garden of Night.

She herself was soon running after a parachute, which eventually landed in the

chicken-run, scattering the squawking hens in all directions. Carefully gathering up the well-wrapped bundle which had been so lightly carried to earth, she ran to the house and found mother trying to untangle a similar one from the bare branches of her pet fig tree on the sunny side of the house.

Another parachute came down in the young apple orchard; and the one Dick was chasing was carried up the hill and caught in his radio apparatus.

Then oh! the excitement and babble when at last everything was gathered up and spread out on the porch! It was such fun undoing all the wrappings that had protected the parcels in their flight.

"Thank you, Mr. Santa Claus!" cried Betty, rapturously, as she hugged a wonderful little doll—just the right size for a little girl to cuddle, which Mary Elinor said was the unbreakable kind.

There were a Teddy-bear and an elephant, a dog and a cat, and two toy airplanes! But that was not all! Santa Claus had remembered every one in the family. There were wonderful red-topped boots for the twins, and two warm little red sweaters; a lovely rose-colored one for Mary Elinor, a soft blue one for mother, and two warm khaki ones for father and Dick,—and oh, wonder of wonders, two practice keys and wires, that Dick and Mary Elinor might have a private telegraph system and practise sending messages to each other, so that some day, when they could have a dynamo in the pump-house, they might send real wireless messages.

They decorated the tree in the living-room with all the shining things that had fallen from the air,—stars and candles and birds and strings of tinsel. Then they hung on it their gifts, and heaped them at the foot, and as darkness came, Dick lighted the candles. Then, all holding hands around the sparkling tree, they sang Christmas carols as they had never sung them before.

Afterward, around a warm fire of manzanita, the twins listened, wide-eyed while mother told the beautiful story of Christmas over again,—how shepherds watching their flocks on hills very much like these, saw wonderful sights and heard glad tidings in the night.

"God bless Santa Claus," said Betty in her prayer, her sleepy, curly head against mother's knee.

"And God bless Jack Randall and Lieutenant Avery. Amen," finished Bobby, happily.

Long after the twins were in dreamland, Mary Elinor, brooding over the fire, looked disturbed. She reached an arm over mother's shoulder and whispered softly, "Do you think it's quite right to let the Blessed's go on believing in Santa Claus?"

Mother laughed and hugged her.

"Wise little daughter," she said. "Haven't you learned yet to have faith in the real Santa Claus?"

"What do you mean, mother?"

"Don't you see that Santa Claus is just the loving spirit of Christmas that slips into people's hearts and warms them inside, till they must make some one else happy?"

"Then he isn't just make-believe, after all!" said honest Mary Elinor, with a sigh of relief. "Oh, I'm so glad!"

The Birds' Christmas Tree.

T WAS the day before Christmas,
And all through the woods
Every creature was busy
With holiday goods.

"I'll tell you a secret,"
Chirped Chickadee-dee,
"We wood-folk are trimming
A fine Christmas tree.

"The pheasant has given
The best of his tail,
We've nice speckled feathers
From Bobby, the quail.

"The blue-jay has sacrificed
Part of his crest.
Goldfinch and partridge
Have furnished the rest.

"We've feathery clematis—
Berries so gay
From rowan and bitter-sweet—
Gathered to-day.

"Of chestnuts and beechnuts
We have a great store;
The squirrels collected
A bushel or more.

"The crow brought some flag-root;
We've dipped it in honey—
'Tis better than candy
You purchase with money.

"On the tree-top trapeze
The nuthatch and I
Will do our best tricks—
Just under the sky.

"And last on the programme
We foresters gay
Will sing in chorus,
'A glad Christmas Day!'"

MARGARET M. LEIGHTON,
in *The Churchman*.

The Uninvited Guest.

WHEN the long, lighted train pulled into Fairwood on Christmas Eve, Roderick Dale was there to meet the little guests who were coming to spend the holidays with him.

Mr. Dale swung the children to the platform. "Five—six—seven—eight," he counted. Then he hurried them out to a big sleigh and tucked all of them in under furry robes. The driver spoke to the horses, and away they went, shaking music from their silver bells across the snow.

When the sleigh reached the house ten minutes later the children swarmed up the broad steps.

Mrs. Dale met them at the top. "All eight of you here?" she asked.

"All but Rick Payson!" they cried. "He couldn't come."

Roderick's father stopped short. "But I counted eight," he declared.

The children did not know how that could be; they had thought he was counting Roderick in, they said.

"I'll count them again!" cried Roderick. So in the light that streamed from the hall he counted his guests carefully. Three Prestons, two Torreys, a Morton, and a Ray—that made seven. Then he stopped short in front of a dark, silent little figure that stood apart from the rest.

"Who is this boy?" he asked.

Sure enough, who was he? They hurried into the lighted hall, and all eyes were turned on the stranger. He was very small and was bundled up a big overcoat. Between his coat collar and his funny peaked cap a pair of large black eyes stared solemnly out.

"What is your name?" asked Mrs. Dale.



"ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING."

The little boy replied briefly that it was Timothy.

"Timothy what?"

"Baxter. And I was going alone to visit my grandfather at Baywood. Where is my grandfather?"

Mrs. Dale turned to her husband. "O William, how did you get hold of this child? His people must be so anxious!"

Mr. Dale looked worried. "The boy must have thought the conductor called 'Baywood,'" he said. "And then I scooped him up with the rest and didn't notice."

He hurried away to telephone to the other station, while the children took off their wraps and began to laugh and talk again, still casting curious glances at the odd little stranger.

"I've talked with his grandfather," Roderick's father said, coming back. "It's all right. There's no other train to-night, and so Timothy will stay here with us."

Timothy ate his supper slowly and afterwards withdrew to a corner, where he watched the other children's games with wondering eyes.

"We shouldn't dare play with him," they said. "He looks so solemn."

When it was nearly bedtime Roderick wandered into the sitting-room. There was a frown on his face.

"I wish that stupid little old Timothy didn't have to be here!" he complained. "He is so funny and big-eyed—like an owl. And mother says he's to sleep in my room. Nobody asked him here, and there's no place for him to stay."

Roderick's grandfather laid down his book.

"This little Timothy's having the same trouble another child had," he said. "Only in a whole town *He* couldn't find anywhere to stay."

"What child?" Roderick inquired, inter-

ested. "And what town? It must have been a pretty poor sort of place, I should think. Where did the boy sleep, grandfather?"

The old man picked up his book again. "In a stable, so the story runs," he said. "The name of the town was Bethlehem."

Roderick's cheeks grew scarlet. He walked over to the window and pressed his hot face to the frosty glass. A big gold star was shining just above the sky line. After a while he turned away without a word.

A few minutes later the household was startled to hear peals of laughter from the playroom. Timothy, wandering round alone, had found Roderick's hobbyhorse behind the door. It was plain that he had never seen such a thing in all his life. He stood in front of it and shouted with delight. Then some one put him on the horse's back, and he gathered up the reins, still shouting, and began to ride. He rode hard and fast until it was time to go to bed.

Early the next morning the children came creeping downstairs to get their stockings. They gathered in a joyful circle round the bright fire in the living-room.

Suddenly the door opened softly. Timothy Baxter stood on the threshold. He was dressed in a suit of Roderick's night-clothes, and his hair stood up all over his head; he gazed with pleasure at the half-emptied stockings.

"Which is my stocking, please?" he asked in a clear, high little voice.

No one answered, and so he spoke again. "If you please," he repeated quietly but firmly.

The children looked uncomfortable. This was too bad. They realized what had happened: in the bustle and confusion the unexpected guest had been overlooked. They eyed one another in dismay.

"Perhaps mine fell on the floor," Timothy suggested gently.

At that Roderick scrambled to his feet. "See here, Timothy," he said. "You run back to bed for just five minutes, and then come down and get your stocking."

As the door closed, he turned quickly to the others. "We'll have to make up a stocking for him," he said. "And there's no time to lose."

When Timothy appeared, five minutes later, he had his share with the rest.

Right after breakfast a big shabby sleigh drew up in the yard—Timothy's grandparents had come to get him.

The family went to look for Timothy and found him riding the hobbyhorse. He was decked out in all his Christmas presents—a red toboggan cap, a drum, and a horn slung over his shoulders. When he heard that his grandfather was ready for him he dismounted briskly and pulled a pair of colored reins—another Christmas gift—from his pocket. He fastened the reins on the horse's shaggy neck. "Come along, Racer!" he cried.

Poor Timothy, he had made a terrible mistake! He had understood that the hobbyhorse, too, was to be his, to take home, and he believed that if he only pulled hard enough it would move forward as well as up and down. He had even given it a name. When he found out the truth, he bowed his head with its gay toboggan cap and hid his face in Racer's mane. He did not cry; he only stood in dumb despair. A bigger boy

THE BEACON CLUB



OUR PURPOSE: Helpfulness.

OUR MOTTO: Let your light shine.

OUR BADGE: The Beacon Club Button.



Writing a letter for this corner makes you a member of the Beacon Club. Address, The Beacon Club, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

MAIN STREET,
DIGHTON, MASS.

Dear Miss Buck,—I go to the Unitarian church. I go to Sunday school every Sunday. I have not missed a Sunday for four years. I am very much interested in the stories of *The Beacon*. I also like very much to read the letters of the members. I would like to become a member of the Club and wear its button.

If any of the members of the Beacon Club would like to write to me, I would be very glad to answer.

Yours sincerely,
LINDA GORDEN.

LANCASTER, PA.

My Dear Miss Buck,—I have a new doll. Her name is Helen. I have another little doll. Her name is Sally. She is very pretty. She has a little doll herself.

I like the *Beacons* you sent. We took up a collection to-day in our school for the Campaign. I earned my money by working for my mother.

I hope that you will come to see us again.

would not have made such a mistake, but Timothy was only five years old.

"Mother," said Roderick, "let him have the horse. He must have it. Don't you see?"

"Do you mean that, Roddy?" asked Mrs. Dale.

Roderick nodded. "I don't want it so very much," he said.

So they lifted the horse into the back of the big sleigh, while old Mr. and Mrs. Baxter looked on, smiling, and the Dales and all the little guests stood by to watch.

Timothy would not stir until the horse was firmly tied in with its head toward the real horses' heads. Then, when Mr. Dale started to lift him into place between the old people, he squirmed out of his hands and scrambled over the side.

"I will ride Racer," he said in positive tones.

No one could stop him. He climbed to the hobbyhorse's back and sat there, clutching the reins.

As the sleigh drove slowly out of the gate, the hobbyhorse bounced up and down. Timothy sat erect, drum, horn and all. It was a strange sight; all the way down the road people turned round and looked. Roderick stood on the porch laughing. The last thing he saw, as the team turned a bend, was a spot of bright red bobbing gayly in the Christmas sunshine.

VIRGINIA STANARD,
in *The Youth's Companion*.

The Christmas Spirit.

OVER the world, with outspread wings,
The Spirit of Christmas broods and sings
Of happy, hopeful, helpful things
All for you and me:
Charity, wide and deep and high,
Love, that reaches from earth to sky,
Peace, that close to the heart doth lie—
All these gifts are free.

Our Dumb Animals.

What do you do in Boston? Do you tell stories to other girls and boys?

Your loving friend,

MARY W. DAVIS.

334 SOUTH ASHELEY STREET,
ANN ARBOR, MICH.

Dear Miss Buck,—I do want to join the Beacon Club. I go to the Unitarian church in Ann Arbor. My Sunday-school teacher's name is Mrs. White. My school teacher's name is Miss Benzine. Our minister's name is Mr. Robins.

I am in the IIIA grade in school. I have a little sister five years old. I am eight and a half.

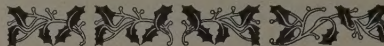
Your friend,
JANE GROH.

502 SECOND STREET,
MARIETTA, OHIO.

Dear Miss Buck,—I am twelve years old. I go to the Unitarian Sunday school. We have a club called the Dorothea Dix Circle. We are studying "Heroic Lives." My teacher's name is Mrs. Coil. Our preacher's name is Mr. Lloyd. I would like to become a member of the Beacon Club and wear its pin.

Yours truly,

MARY JANE PETERS.



Christmas Greeting.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS to you all, dear *Beacon* readers, from the Editor. Will you hear on Christmas morning a song of angels that tell of joy and peace and goodwill on the earth? The Editor believes that she will, and that a large part of that song will be made up of the joyous laughter of children. Hearing that, our hearts will know that God's love is still present with us on the earth as it was on that first Christmas morning when in a humble place the Christ-child was born.



Signs of the Times.

SMILES on the faces as
people go past,
Squeaks in the snow where
they hurry so fast;
Meetings and greetings, so
merry and glad,
Wishings and winkings—"all
Santa Claus mad";
Laughter that bubbles, and
dancing wee feet;
Holly-wreaths hung all the
way down the street;
See the green Christmas trees,
frosted and pearled;
Christmas is coming; there's
joy in the world!

Loving hands busy by day and
by night;

Loving hearts beating, all buoyant and
light;
Secrets and whispers and mystery rife,
Doors that dare close e'en between man
and wife;
Parcels and packages, bundle and box,
Can't some one hurry these stupid old
clocks?

Santa Claus waits on his trip to be whirled;
Christmas is coming; there's joy in the
world!

GLADYS HYATT SINCLAIR.

RECREATION CORNER.

ENIGMA XXV.

I am composed of 15 letters.
My 7, 8, 9, 6, is part of a ship.
My 5, 7, 11, 14, 14, is not large.
My 11, 1, 6, is a deed.
My 2, 4, 14, 14, 15, are high places.
My 3, 13, 8, 7, is to travel slowly.
My 10, 12, 13, 9, 15 is a symbol of sacrifice.
My whole is music we all love.

J.

ENIGMA XXVI.

I am composed of 27 letters.
My 15, 17, 16, 4, 5, comes with cold weather.
My 25, 26, 27, 4, is a musical service.
My 2, 21, 22, 23, 24, is part of the arm.
My 19, 20, 3, 12, is pleasant talk.
My 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, is a dimension.
My 1, 2, 9, 8, 18, is a kind of string.
My 13, 14, 7, 5, is a vegetable.
My whole are the opening words of a favorite poem.

J. M.

MORE MISSING WORDS.

(Each word contains the same little word of four letters.)

1. There was not a of truth in the statement.
2. She wore a dress.
3. In which should this paper be placed?
4. The two were not for long.
5. We all of the good things.
6. The wall was thin.
7. That man seems to me a great
8. They tried their best to defend the
9. I am afraid I am not an judge.

E. S. W.

ADDED LETTERS.

Here are ten words, each containing five letters; their middle letter is o. Add the first and last two letters to make the following: to decorate; to improve; a color; a width; a spice; a sphere; strong; to cook; a coat; the cold.

.. O ..
.. O ..
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Sunday-school Advocate.

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES IN NO. 10.

ENIGMA XXI.—Judge not that ye be not judged.

ENIGMA XXII.—Patience is the art of hoping.
CHANGEABLE COLORS.—1. Brown, frown, crown. 2. Pink, link, rink. 3. Red, bed, wed. 4. Dun, bun, gun. 5. Fawn, dawn, lawn. 6. Drab, crab, grab. 7. Buff, cuff, muff. 8. Gray, bray, tray.

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FLORENCE BUCK, EDITOR.

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